

Political Party's Strongmen at Local Level: Blater Versus Lora in Political Arena

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Abstract: The study is to describe political party's local elite in Malang, East Java. The researcher finds out that there are variation, relation and interaction among elites. Blater a group of local strongmen and elite oligarchy have done unfair practice of nepotism while lora another group of local strong men work together in synergy with democratic elite to have access to power. In order to describe the dynamics of political party local elites, the requirement to fulfill is research methodology that results in descriptive data in the form of words or utterances from individuals or behavior being observed. Interview, focus group discussions and documentary data are the data collection methods. The research's findings are: the existence of political party strongmen shows the capacity of individuals who have the authority to determine various contexts of power; in the context of power, the existence of political party strongmen can limit as well as reduce the implementation of the political party regulation in the internal dynamics of the local inner circle of political party and close relations depends upon a symbiotic relationship and the expression of mutual interest between the strongmen blater and the oligarchy so that patron-client relation takes place.

Key words: Political party, local strongmen, democratic party, authority elite, implimentation

INTRODUCTION

Elite as formulated by Haryanto (1990) is consistently refer to an individual or group with certain privilege, where the privilege allows the individual or the group to perform particular roles influential to certain branch of life. Meanwhile, in order to identify roles of the elites in policy making some experts such as Lasswell see it from various different dimensions. According Laswell elite is individuals who achieve the highest value of the society because of their capabilities to actively participate in decision making. On the other hand, Mills argues that elite has the role in policy making because they hold the highest position in their institutions while Putnam classifies elite into two categories, the elites with direct access to policy-making process and those with non-direct access to the process.

Even though, the definition of the concept of elite varies, there is one similarity that is the elite is a group of people who have primary position in the society and they play such pivotal role in social life. Elite superiority over the society completely depends upon their success in manipulating their environment through symbols, goodness and actions. The elite is an organized group with political authority. The group consists of organized minoritie s who force their will through manipulation or violence, especially in democracy.

Related to the elite and authority, Varma (2001) argues that "the thing which drives the political elite and elite groups to play an active role in politics is political theoriest's statements that there (constantly) is inevitable and unavoidable humanitarian impulse to achieve some power. Politics, according to the theorists is a game of power and therefore individuals involved should take some responsibilities to socialize and instill some values to find some expressions that enable the accession to power. The desire for power and effort to have more authority is the cause of political clash among elites in political arena.

The purpose of the study is to probe and describe political party's local elite. Based on the study on one of the political parties in Malang, East Java, the researcher finds out that there are variation, relation and interaction among elites; blater a group of local strongmen and elite oligarchy have done unfair practice of nepotism while lora, another group of local strongmen, work together in synergy with democratic elite to have access to power. These groups then apply their strategies to get, run and retain power in an organized manner in political parties democratically or not.

Literatur review: Elite theory assumse that there are two categories in each society; the first is a small group of individuals with capabilities and therefore, the individuals

have governing position. They are divided into two groups, authority and non-authority. The second category is a bigger group of individuals who are destined to be governed by the first group (Varma, 2001). Governing elite is relatively small in number and has capabilities and superiority to make use of power; the governing elite handle all political power and monopolize power so that they can use it for good causes for example public welfare, improvement of education, expansion of employment opportunities and public health improvement. However, the power can also be used for negative causes such as to get more money for themselves, strengthen the position of oligarchy, get their clans or family members government job and even join power to suppress the opposition.

Non-governing elite have second-class position in elite power strata they will substitute individuals whose position is above them in case the governing elite fail to control the government. Non-governing elite also becomes competitor of the governing elite when they are not able to perform their task to control the power.

Haryanto (2005) analyzes the role and influence of elite from three different perspectives, position, reputation and decision-making. The differences among the three are as follow: Position perspective supposes that: an individual who has an authority among a group of elite is the one with the highest position in the formal organization; power correlates fully with position in an organization; analysis of position is the easiest and most commonly used technique to find out who is the person with the most authority in an organization; the analysis assumes that users have got previous knowledge who the important politician is and which institutions with fake influence and position analysis is effective only when it is applied to the society or organization with uneven distribution of power while the analysis will not be effective when it is applied to a well-balanced society or organization. In short, the assumption of the analysis is “whoever is sitting at the top of an organization, he has the main role and huge influence in all movement of the organization”.

There are two theoretical framework commonly used to describe the phenomenon of local strongmen, the term coined by Migdal or bossism, the term coined by Sidel (1991). According to Migdal (2001), all groups of the society have leader where the leader is relatively autonomous from the government. Furthermore, each society has social capacity that enables them to set their own rules with government intervention. When government capacity to control weakens (weak state) local strongmen is going to step up and show their authorities. Migdal (2001) mentions triangle of

accommodation strategy as the strategy strongmen use to survive. It means, the presence of strong men is the reflection of how strong the society is.

Migdal (2001) argues that the reason why local strongmen can achieve success is their influence instead of the regulations made by the government using the statement “why local strong men have through their success at social control often effectively captured parts of third world states”. They are successful in getting important positions and making sure of local resource allocation due to their influence (own rules) and not because of rules officially designed. According to Migdal (2001), there are three arguments to describe successful phenomenon of local strongmen, namely:

- Local strongmen has returned weblike societies through autonomous organization owned by socially fragmented condition of the society
- Local strongmen carry out social control through the distribution of components called strategies of survival from the local society. It results in the pattern of personalism, clientalism and patron-client relation
- Local strongmen control state agency and resource so that policy becomes the result of compromise with local strongmen’s agenda. Local strongmen perform control and limitation on government autonomy and capacity and are successful in reducing the dominance of the government to achieve the purpose of social change

Different from Migdal (2001) based on his study on local elites in the Philippines, Sidel (1999) states that the concept of bossism refer to “predatory power brokers who achieve monopolistic control over both coercive and economic resources within give territorial jurisdictions or bailiwicks”. The factors that guarantee the continuation of bossism in the Philippines are: the structure of government institution; the concentration of private capital in the level of local as a part of the government policy; US legacy in the form of the Philippine’s election system and government apparatus involvement in the early stages of capitalist development. Sidel concludes the existence and continuation of bossism is the reflection of government power. It is the opposite of Migdal’s strong society and weak states thesis. Local strongmen maintains power by collaborating with the government and government political party and carrying out stationary bandit as well as rowing bandit (criminal act) (Sidel, 1999).

Migdal also states that local strongmen can survive as long as they are willing to have collaboration with the government and government political party and based on

the collaboration triangle of accommodation is established. Ironically, the triangle allows using the national resources to support local strongmen and their organization which manages the game of conflict. Furthermore, Migdal (2001) argues that local strongmen existence also depends upon the government authority to control them; they learn to accommodate popular leaders to attract government organizations in a lower level. Sidel claims that the use of coercive violence to is the strategy the Philippine's boss use to survive.

Studies on political party local elite: The word elite in the previous explanation can refer to an individual for example political party strongmen or a group of individuals such as elite oligarchy. They play an important role in the allocation of power sources as well as giving influence to control a political party. Their participation in local political party can be seen from three political dimensions, namely: the method they use to gain control; the one they use to run power and the one they use to retain power. The elaboration of the local elite of some political parties, whether he is an individual or s/he belongs to a group is presented as follow.

Individual elite (political party local strongmen): In the dynamics of local political party, we are going to find the party strongmen, an individual with power to determine the direction and policy of the political party. Suzanne Keller uses the term decision maker elite to describe the individual. As an individual, the strongmen is able to express his/her influence and make sure the distribution and allocation of power sources taking place because of his/her one-of-a-kind role in the party; although s/he is not the leader of a political party, s/he has the adequate capacity to determine to the distribution and allocation of power sources, one bigger than what the other members have which makes him or her an important individual in the political party. The strongmen can even trespass some of the boundaries set by a political party and decide the policy of the part since they have privilege other members do not. Adopting Putnam's terminology in the analysis of the elite such individual is called political party strongmen because they have bigger reputation and decision-making contribution compared to their position in political party. Besides Suzanne Keller's and Robert Putnam's conception above (Migdal, 2001; Sidel, 1999) theories about local strongmen, bossism are relevant to use to construct the conception of political party strongmen.

Political party strongmen can exist due to certain privileges they have the privilege to control and give orders can be used for positive cause but may also be use for negative ones. There are bad strongmen who influence

political party negatively and good strongmen who give positive influence to the party. Bad strongmen are people who appreciate their authorities in political party. Bad strongmen are people who appreciate their authorities in political party using non-democratic methods and do not avoid criminal acts to achieve their desire.

On the other hand, good strongmen are the strongmen who implement democratic methods to appreciate their authorities and avoid violence in getting what they desire. In political arena, the strongmen work together with a group of individuals who unify and have similar characteristics similar to Pareto, Michel and Mosca's quotation that is "internally, the elites are homogenous, unified and have group awareness. Individuals belong to the elite group know each other well has similar background, value, loyalty and need".

Elite oligarchy (political party local elite group): Oligarchy is derived from the Greek which means several and oligarchy literally means a country or political system authorized by several individuals. Oligarchy as political system was known during the Ancient Greek era in a city-country called polis. Soehino (2001) mentions Aristotele's definition of oligarchy that is "oligarchy is a bad form of government as the ruling faction governs solely in its own interest, disregarding those of the poor". Therefore, oligarchy is a form of government whose authority is in the hand of people who appreciate their power negatively; the power they have is violated for the sole purpose and interest of an individual or particular groups.

Elaborating Aristotele's definition on oligarchy, it is the form of government where the authority has two notorious characteristics "negative attitudes" and "individual or group interest". Local oligarchic party is a group of individuals who rules their party poorly for the sole interest of him/herself or his/her groups. The methods these individuals used are: to consider access asset and network their parties own as their own (political party personalization); to rule the party in authoritative manners; not open to criticism (the absence of political control); being unconstitutional by putting aside "fatzon" and regulations of the party; to give no chance for individuals willing to become the elites or prohibit competitors; when they see individuals who can potentially be their competitors, they are going to take any measure to hinder or even end the individual's career in politics (predatory); may commit criminal act to retain power (coercive) and at last, oligarchic party is a group of individuals who attempts at taking, running and retaining their power using any measure regardless it is considered as criminal act.

Democratic elite: In the dynamics of local politics, we are going to encounter political party elite who runs the party in democratic manner. The characteristics of democratic elite are: to consider the ownership of his/her political party of the access and assets they have and therefore think those should be managed by on the regulations of the party; to involve various groups of individuals as the authorities (democratic); open to criticism and do not avoid political control; being constitutional by consistently paying attention to fatzon, rules and regulations of the political party; give chance for individuals willing to become the elites and treat them as partners; when they see individuals who can potentially be their competitors, democratic elites will give the individuals flexibility as well as developing their own capabilities to establish healthy competition; persuasive methods, dialogues and other non-coercive methods are carried out to retain power and finally, democratic elites are a group of individuals who attempt at taking, running and retaining their power by paying attention to fatzon and the order of the political party they belong to.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to describe the dynamics of political party local elites, the requirement to fulfill is “research methodology that results in descriptive data in the form of words or utterances from individuals or behavior being observed”. Using observation as data collection method as well as documentation, the researcher is able to obtain secondary data that is relevant to the topic of the discussion. On the other hand, interview and small group discussion are the data collection methods to obtain accurate and relevant data primary data for the book. In order to get such kind of information, trustworthy individuals and understanding to the topic of the discussion are of the necessities. The sources of information in the study are:

- Subject 1, the current strongmen of Partai Amanat Nasional in Malang, East Java
- Subject 2, the former chairman of the Regional Representative Council of “Partai Amanat Nasional” in Malang, East Java; he was the chairman in the previous running year
- Subject 3, the chairman of the Branch Councils of Partai Amanat Nasional in Lowokwaru, Malang, East Java
- Subject 4, the chairman of the Branch Councils of Partai Amanat Nasional in Kedung Kandang, Malang, East Java

- Subject 5, the vice chairman of the Regional Representative Council of Partai Amanat Nasional in Malang, East Java
- Subject 6, an activist in Partai Amanat Nasional in Malang, East Java
- Subject 7, the vice secretary of the Regional Representative Council of Partai Amanat Nasional in Malang, East Java
- Subject 8, an activist in Partai Amanat Nasional who is closely related to the Komsu
- Subject 9, the pioneer of Partai Amanat Nasional youth ranks in Malang, East Java

The data analysis used is qualitative data analysis which according to Faisal involves: note-taking that results in field note (data reduction) in the form of well-elaborated reports; the reports have certain codes that allow the researcher to trace down the sources of data; coding, scoring, collecting, selecting, classifying, synthesizing, drawing conclusion and making index and analyzing and interpreting the data, thought process by classifying the data into meaningful category, seeking and finding out patterns and relationship as well as making general findings (Moleong, 2002).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Strongmen Blater versus strongmen Lora: Strong men may not be official members of formal organization and they are not parts of the government structure either. If the strong men are sitting in the formal structure of authority, they will be very powerful and respected. When they are sitting in non-formal structure of authority, strong men will have such immense influence in policy-making and how the policy is applied. Sometimes, the strongmen are the ones behind all policies made by the official leader; the strongmen’s contribution, interest and thought are involved in the policy.

The point is since the strongmen has some privileges other people around them do not have they are given certain rights applicable in particular environment for example the rights to implement and design certain rules, the rights to control economic resources, the rights to claim validity or decide whether a regulation and action is true or not true among the society. The privilege the strongmen have enables them to bring positive change to the society and such huge capabilities and influence can be used for positive acts. The shortcoming is the strongmen may potentially be really dominant and non democratic in running their power.

Similar phenomena taking place in the Regional Representative Council of Partai Amanat Nasional in

Malang, East Java. The political party strongmen exist because they have certain privileges; the privileges are used to control and run the political party bring positive changes to the party but may also be used to bring negative influence to the party. There are two types of strongmen, bad strongmen and good strongmen. Bad strongmen are people who appreciate their power in Partai Amanat Nasional using non-democratic methods use violence to get what they desire and are going to take any measure to achieve their goals while good strongmen are people who appreciate their power in the party using democratic methods and avoid violence to get what they desire.

The characteristics of Partai Amanat Nasional Malang strongmen are: individuals who are not the official chair person of the party but due to their strong role and influence become dominant figures in various policies of the party for example ability to decide the chair person and secretary of the party, the board of administrators of the party, the candidates for the legislative as well as to determine the distribution and allocation of power sources; in various context, individual role of the strongmen to decide some of the policies the party has defeats collective collegiality of the board of Regional Representative Council of Partai Amanat Nasional in Malang, East Java; in particular political context, the desire of the strongmen can defeat the board of administrator's decision in the management of the organization and there is a patron-client relation between the political party strong men and elite groups around them.

Based on the discussions the researcher has with his colleagues, the researcher draws a temporary conclusion that according to his colleagues bad strong men and good strongmen are not the suitable terminologies to identify political behavior of Komsis and Ali Ja'far. The reason is the terminologies have gotten into the area of political philosophy and ethics; the concept of good and bad in politics is vague and the most important aspect in politics is how to get power. Even though, the researcher's colleagues do not completely agree with the researcher's opinion, the researcher tries to find the most suitable references to use as a metaphor for the strongmen of Partai Amanat Nasional in Malang. It seems that the suitable document to map the strongmen of Partai Amanat Nasional is the one about Kyai and Blater.

Blater is an individual or a group of individuals with capabilities to solve problems using physical force of carok the popular term to describe Madurese whiz Abdur (Rozaki, 2004) conducted an in-depth study about the phenomenon of Blater. His study reveals that the local politics which has so far been identified with the role of

kyai and ulama, the religious leaders is actually influenced by Blater; the local political elites such as klebun or the head of the village are dominated by blater and therefore both kyai and blater have strong influence and at the same time compete against each other in Madura, mainly Bangkalan and Sampang. Rozaki then writes a book entitled "Menabur Kharisma Menuai Kuasa: Kiprah Kiai dan Blater sebagai rezim kembar di Madura". In another writing of his, Rozaki (2004) also discusses that the current regent of Bangkalan Kyai Fuad Imron is known as Kyai Blater because he combines two very different traditions, Kyai and Blater. The regent who came from Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa is the son of Madurese's Kyai Cholil however he socializes with Blater in Bangkalan when he was young.

Blater in Madura and the eastern part of East Java including Pasuruan, Probolinggo, Lumajang, Jember, Situbondo, Bondowoso and Banyuwangi or known as tapal kuda has their own environment, community, network, relation and tradition different than those of other communities like santri, a group of students studying Islam. The traditions of blateran are: remoh or a tradition where blater gathers and have tayub as well as tandak/sinden, female dancers and singers. Alcoholic drink is a part of the tradition.

The host of tayub will gain higher social status when more people attend the event; carok or physical fight using todek, monteng and arek to defend himself or his family's integrity. In carok, it does not matter whether the blater involved are right or wrong, the blater fights individually or in group (Wiyata, 2006). The most important thing in carok is to be courageous and win because the winning blater will have higher social status and acknowledgment from the society; cock fight, martial arts and bull-race are other traditions conducted when blater gathers.

Geopolitically, Malang was once considered as mentaraman area which stretches from Malang to the west. Mentaraman area typologically is influenced by Mataram culture has strong abangan society and Javanese influence as well as dominated by the nationalist party. Furthermore, Pasuruan to the East until Banyuwangi are the areas with the majority of Moslem who is influenced by the tradition of santri and the dominant party is the Islamic party. Based on the researcher's observation, the eastern part of Malang is not categorized as mentaraman area. However, religiopolitically, the area has similar characteristics to the tapal kuda area since it has strong santri culture and Madurese is the dominant ethnic group in the area. Therefore, the researcher feels that he needs to mention Madurese culture and the tradition of Keblateran in the

east of Malang which becomes the regional setting of the study because the existence of the culture and tradition can still be traced back until now.

In the tapal kuda areas, there is a legend about blater who until now is still considered as tutur tinular called Sakerah. Sakerah is a blater from Pasuruan known for his strive to fight for the Dutch Army who treats the sugar cane farmer violently; he is famous for his loose shirt, white-and-red stripes t-shirt, udeng or a traditional head piece and clurit, Madurese traditional weapon. Sakerah is the manifestation of local heroic figure that relies on his physical ability carok to defend justice and respect. He is the role model of those having blater tradition.

Based on the observations, the researcher finds out that the existence of blater in the political events in Malang is solely as political accessory. They become security person, pengandel or courageous people, mass getter as well as perform their physical abilities such as martial arts as the attraction in various campaigns or events. Therefore in political context, blater functions as: political bumper which means by working together with blater, political party, candidates of the legislative, mayors or vice mayors feel that they have security groups that can protect them from any disturbance from their competitors since blater with their physical abilities and carok can act as bumper in the case of sudden physical contact; pengandel which means by working together with a group of blater, political party, candidates of the legislative, mayors or vice mayors feel that they have support groups so that they are more courageous to move further in answering various sudden, unpredicted political challenge and risks; mass and vote getter which means with the relation they have blater has pretty stable environment, community as well as social, economic and political network.

Therefore, using blater is actually similar to taking advantage of them and all entities they have to get mass and voters; political accessories which means the ability of blater in martial arts and other traditional arts such as bantengan, kuda lumping, tunil and many others help reducing the tension of political situation which sometimes is heated and full of intricate and competitions.

Not only is the strongmen blater who become the focus of the study political accessory but they can also conduct the penetration of power, dominate political party and appreciate authority with the capacities they have however they can also turn into antagonistic elites who brings conflict to the political party. Komsil based on the character is similar to people with the culture of blater. He is born as Madurese was once the leader of a region and has been fond of physical violence as problem solving

method since his younger age. He has some influence in blateran area in Kedungkandang which can sometimes be mobilized by Komsil. Kedungkandang is an area located in the eastern part of Malang. In the past, Madurese was the dominant ethnic group in the area and according to the informants blater is a familiar terminology for individuals living in the area. It means sociology the origin of Madurese people in the area can be traced to Bangkalan and Sampang.

Still in Madura, according to Wiyata (2006), there are three social strata in Madurese Islamic boarding schools, namely: Keyae, who refers to religious leaders with vast amount of religious knowledge; bhindhara, who refers to individuals that have graduated from Islamic boarding schools but their knowledge about Islam is not as much as one of the keyae and santri are students of Islamic boarding schools who also stay in the schools. Different from Latief Wiyata's explanation, three people from Sumenep, Madura, Imam and Syaiful mention the social strata in Madurese Islamic boarding schools can be illustrated in the form of the following pyramid, namely: Kyai is the owner, educator and manager of Islamic boarding schools.

Kyai is responsible for transforming Islamic knowledge such as jurisprudence, hadith and tafsir or known as the yellow book to his students; Lora has several definitions namely: the sons of Kyai or Gus in the tradition of Javanese Islamic boarding schools; the sons of Kyai who have yet become or want to become Kyai; anyone, either he is the son of Kyai or not whose responsibility is to manage Islamic boarding schools for instance build some constructions, expand the area of the schools, establish network with other Islamic boarding schools, facilitate Kyai and his families, synergize components of the schools and many others and individuals who gain the trust of Kyai or his aides who always obeys him and his orders; bindere or senior students of Islamic boarding school whose responsibilities are to study Islam as well as assisting Kyai in teaching their juniors and santri is student of Islamic boarding school who stays in the school for certain period of time in order to study the yellow book. Islamic boarding schools have their own tradition and environment but they can also influence the social environment of the society around them.

In Madura, areas of Islamic boarding schools have strong religio-politics influence and people living around the schools are influenced by anything becoming the affiliation of the schools. It means when Kyai has an affiliation with particular political party, automatically his students as well as people living around the school will follow his footsteps. The following political party

strongman, Ali Ja'far, has almost the same characteristics as individuals with the culture of lora in the tradition of Madurese Islamic boarding schools. He is the leader of Munawarroh, an Islamic boarding school in Kedungkandang and when he was young, he went to an Islamic boarding school in Sidogiri, Pasuruan.

He likes to build and expand Islamic boarding schools is extremely obedient to Kyai and able to synergize various components of Islamic boarding schools. In short, Ali Ja'far has such strong tradition of students of Islamic boarding schools. The following problem that emerges is how Komsis as blater and Ali Ja'far as lora can transform their experiences about life into the dynamics of political party, especially Partai Amanat Nasional in Malang, East Java.

CONCLUSION

The lesson learned from the case are: the existence of political party strongmen shows the capacity of individuals who have the authority to determine various contexts of power. Democratic party propose collective collegiality to determine various context of policy-making. Due to the condition, the existence of the strongmen becomes creates a dilemma for example the dilemma in determining position which means the chairman of political party turns out to be toy of elite of the strongmen and the dilemma in structure which means collectivity in the management of the party is substituted by individual authority of political party strongmen as well as the dilemma in personalization of institution which means the strongmen consider political party as their individual belonging so they can implement their own rules; in the context of power, the existence of political party strongmen can limit as well as reduce the implementation of the political party regulation in the internal dynamics of the local inner circle of political party; close relations depends upon a symbiotic relationship and the expression of mutual interest between the strongmen blater and the oligarchy so that patron-client relation takes place.

For that matter, they are successful in various power contexts in the regional representative council in partai amanat nasional malang, for example: the party's success in introducing presidium leadership and eliminating the legitimate leadership of the regional representative

council; its success to secure its candidacy by placing an individual from their circle as the secretary of the committee of regional election region ii of which role is to carry out the election in malang; its success to place four individuals they are close to in the local parliament of Malang from 1999-2004; its success in conducting the first regional deliberation of Partai Amanat Nasional in 2000 and control the party and Different from the strongmen blater who appreciate their power through natifism, the strongmen lora are successful in controlling the political party and support people they are closer to to become the members of the local legislatives using non-violent acts. In fact, lora introduces non-violence when they and people they are close to dominate the political party.

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